

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 5298

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: DC CONFERENCE TO DECIDE ON REFORMS OF PARTY STATUTE

SUMMARY: CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (DC) PRESIDENT MORO WILL OPEN THE DC'S NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MARCH 31 WHICH HAS BEEN CONVENED TO DECIDE ON REFORMS OF THE PARTY'S STATUTE. WHILE REFORM ELEMENTS WILL SUPPORT RULES CHANGES TO PROMOTE A MORE OPEN PARTY (MEMBERSHIP REFORM, DIRECT ELECTION OF OFFICERS), TRADITIONALISTS AND FACTIONAL ADHERENTS WILL SEEK TO PRESERVE THEIR VESTED INTERESTS BY FOCUSING ON IMPROVEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL LINKS WITH YOUTH, WORKER, FEMINIST AND CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS. SINCE ALL OF THE PARTY'S MAJOR LEADERS ARE EXPECTED TO SPEAK, THE MEETING WILL ALSO PROVIDE AN IMPORTANT FORUM FOR DEBATE ON THE PARTY'S POLITICAL STRATEGY AS WELL AS A BAROMETER OF THE DC'S INCREASINGLY CRITICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI. END SUMMARY.

1. ONE YEAR AFTER THE DC'S 1976 NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESS WHICH CULMINATED IN ZACCAGNINI'S DIRECT ELECTION AS PARTY SECRETARY ON A REFORM PLATFORM, THE DC HAS CON-
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VENED A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION CONFERENCE, MARCH 31-APRIL 3 TO DECIDE ON REVISIONS OF THE PARTY STATUTE. THE ASSEMBLY OF 1000 DELEGATES WILL BE OPENED THIS EVENING BY DC PRESIDENT MORO, AND IS TO CONCLUDE WITH SPEECHES BY ANDREOTTI AND ZACCAGNINI. OTHER MAJOR PARTY LEADERS WILL ADDRESS THE CONFERENCE WHICH WILL PROVIDE AN IMPORTANT FORUM FOR A DEBATE ON THE DC'S

STRATEGY AT A POLITICALLY DELICATE TIME.

2. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, THE VARIOUS DC FACTIONS AND GROUPS HAVE DIFFERENT IDEAS ON WHAT THE CONFERENCE SHOULD ACCOMPLISH AND HOW IT SHOULD PROCEED. THE DOROTEO GROUP ARGUE THAT IT SHOULD FOCUS ON THE PARTY'S ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS (EXPANSION OF THE PARTY'S ACTIVITIES IN SOCIETY BY STRENGTHENING RELATIONS WITH CULTURAL, WORKER, FEMINIST AND YOUTH GROUPS). THEY MAINTAIN THAT MORO (IN HIS RECENT BILATERAL MEETING WITH THE SOCIALISTS) HAS ALREADY SET THE DC'S POLITICAL STRATEGY ("PROGRAMMATIC CONVERGENCIES") FOR WHICH A BROAD CONSENSUS EXISTS. REFORM GROUPS, SUCH AS THE "HILTONITES" ARGUE THAT THE PARTY'S LONGER TERM STRATEGY SHOULD BE DISCUSSED. THEY WILL ARGUE STRONGLY FOR A MORE OPEN PARTY WHICH ACTIVELY SEEKS THE PARTICIPATION OF THE DC'S 14 MILLION ELECTORATE IN THE PARTY'S ACTIVITIES.

3. A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR DISCUSSION WILL BE REFORM OF MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA. SINCE FACTIONAL STRENGTH AND COHESION DEPENDS PRIMARILY ON CONTROL OF THE NUMBER OF MEMBERSHIP CARDS, THE ISSUE WILL NOT BE EASILY RE-SOLVED. THE REFORMERS WANT TO SEE THE MEMBERSHIP LISTS OPENED UP TO BREAK THE AUTHORITY OF THE FACTIONAL POTENTATES, "MODERNIZE" THE PARTY BY MAKING IT MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE OPINION OF ITS ELECTORATE, AND ACTIVELY SEEK PARTY MEMBERSHIP IN PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS. OPPONENTS OF THE "OPEN PARTY" PHILOSOPHY WILL FOCUS

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INSTEAD ON MEASURES AIMED AT CLEANING UP SOME OF THE WORST MEMBERSHIP ABUSES (PADDED LISTS OF NONEXISTENT MEMBERS).

4. OTHER IMPORTANT REFORM PROPOSALS INVOLVE REVISION OF THE PARTY STATUTE MAKING THE HOLDING OF BOTH HIGH GOVERNMENT AND PARTY POSITIONS INCOMPATIBLE. AT PRESENT, WITHIN THE DC EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE, INDUSTRIES MINISTER DONAT-CATTIN REMAINS THE LONE HOLD-OUT AGAINST APPLICATION OF THE RULING CLAIMING THAT IT SHOULD NOT APPLY TO FACTIONAL HEADS (FORZE NUOVE). ANOTHER IMPORTANT REFORM WOULD PROVIDE FOR THE DIRECT ELECTION BY CONGRESSES OF PARTY POLITICAL SECRETARIES AT ALL LEVELS (IE. PROVINCIAL, REGIONAL, ETC.).

5. THE CONFERENCE SHOULD PROVIDE A BAROMETRIC READING OF THE PARTY'S INCREASINGLY ESTRANGED RELATIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI. THE PRIME MINISTER AND SOME OF HIS MORE CONTROVERSIAL MINISTERS (NOTABLY COSSIGA)

HAVE LATELY COME UNDER STRONG CRITICISM FROM IN-
FLUENTIAL MEMBERS OF THE DC PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS.
IN THIS CONNECTION, IT IS SOMEWHAT INTERESTING THAT
WHILE THE NON-PARTY PRESS HAS REPORTED ANDREOTTI'S
PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFERENCE, THE DC JOURNAL (POPOLO)
OMITS ANY MENTION OF THE PRIME MINISTER IN ITS
LISTING OF PROGRAM SPEAKERS. GARDNER

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